GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS
IN OUR HOMES, SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES

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In North and South Carolina, sea-level rise is most noticeable in counties along the coast, where beaches shrink, dunes disappear and homes crumble, but the effects of climate change reach well inland. “Beyond the Beach” is a seven-part series examining the health toll that climate change is already taking on the people who live and work in the Carolinas.

Two articles from the 7-part series are presented on pages 8 and 9 of this newsletter.

Sea-Level Rise and King Tides are Flooding Communities Along the East Coast

Flooding has affected coastal communities from the Florida Keys to Maine. Long stretches of shoreline along the East Coast were inundated with water levels running a foot or more above normal. The swollen sea temporarily claimed streets, parking lots and public parks, and even seeped into homes, reminiscent of a storm surge.

But there was no storm to be found. In fact, many places enjoyed pleasant weather and sunshine. Yet coastal flood advisories plastered the coast, forcing road closures and flooding properties.

The culprit? King tides. A name informally attached to extra-high tides spurred by astronomical alignments, king tides often reach their peak in the fall. Decades ago, their impact was minimal. But added to the background of climate-driven sea-level rise, nowadays they are routinely problematic.

“I think of this like a stacking of phenomena,” said William Sweet, an oceanographer with NOAA specializing in sea-level rise and flooding issues. “We didn’t flood 30 or 40 years ago, but since then … sea levels have been a half-foot to a foot higher.”

The rise in water has left thousands of homes and businesses vulnerable to sunny-day flooding, disrupting daily life and undermining property values in some areas.

As greenhouse gases resulting from human activity continue to accumulate in the atmosphere and warm the climate, sea-level rise and coastal inundation will only continue to grow with time, even on sunny days.

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See *Sea-Level Rise and King Tides* on page 2

Sea-Level Rise and King Tides are Flooding Communities Along the East Coast (cont'd)

Continued from page 1…

October is typically the worst month for king tide flooding, with some of the highest water levels of the year.

King tides are the highest tides that occur and are easily predictable based on the orbits of the moon and the earth about the sun. Both celestial bodies exert a gravitational pull on the oceans, helping generate tides. The closer either body, the greater the tide.

Earth is closest to the sun in January, by a margin of more than 3.1 million miles compared with June. That increases tides in the months leading up to and around the new year.

High tides are then maximized when the moon reaches its closest point to Earth in its orbit, known as perigee, which occurred Friday.

Local weather plays a role in tides, too, and tends to enhance them in the fall. Along the East Coast, one of the biggest influences on tides is the Bermuda High, a high-pressure system anchored west of the Azores over the open Atlantic. Winds swirl in a clockwise pattern around it.

During the summer, flow around the Bermuda High brings heat and humidity to the Gulf and East Coasts and soupy conditions to the eastern United States. But during the winter, the Bermuda High shifts farther south and east, its influence on local winds dwindling. The onshore flow it generates is maximized in the summer and reaches a minimum during winter.

That means that the overlap of onshore winds and sun/moon-enhanced tides is greatest during the fall, particularly in the months of September, October and November. The tides are usually the most severe in October, having the most propensity for widespread impact. Waters are also still warm from summertime, and "thermal expansion" makes sea levels just a tad higher.

King tides are a natural phenomenon, but added to the background of rising seas, their impact and disruptive potential is growing exponentially.

One of the challenges with communicating sea level rise is that the impacts associated with it are nonlinear.

In other words, even if sea level were to rise at a constant rate, the amount of flooding coastal communities experience would jump far more quickly.

As sea levels continue to rise, the flooding will become less storm surge flooding and more tidal flooding.

Sea-Level Rise and King Tides are Flooding Communities Along the East Coast (cont'd)

Sweet, of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, noted that the sea level isn't just rising — the rate of rise is accelerating.

In 2019, "what we found was that 90 percent of the tide gauges that we analyzed on the East Coast or Gulf Coast [had] highest all-time sea levels," Sweet said.

One of the challenges with communicating sea level rise is that the impacts associated with it are nonlinear. In other words, even if sea level were to rise at a constant rate, the amount of flooding coastal communities experience would jump far more quickly.

"At 75 percent of these East and Gulf Coast locations, [flooding is] now accelerating on an annual basis," Sweet said. "That's a very important notion to understand. And once infrastructure becomes compromised, once [those impacts are] noticed, the change is going to be quick rather than a slow process."

"As sea levels continue to rise, the flooding will become less storm surge flooding and more tidal flooding," Sweet said. "Then it becomes an elevation game. Already communities are using data to see where they are exposed, and when they have opportunities to relocate critical infrastructure using the types of data we collect to make sound decisions."

Click here to read the article.

See *Toxic air due to wildfires* on page 3

Toxic Air Due to Wildfires Leaves Damage Long After the Smoke

When researchers arrived in this town tucked in the Northern Rockies three years ago, they could still smell the smoke a day after it cleared from devastating wildfires. Their plan was to chart how long it took for people to recover from living for seven weeks surrounded by relentless smoke.

They still don't know, because most residents haven't recovered. In fact, they've gotten worse.

Forest fires had funneled hazardous air into Seeley Lake, a town of fewer than 2,000 people, for 49 days. The air quality was so bad that on some days the monitoring stations couldn't measure the extent of the pollution. The intensity of the smoke and the length of time residents had been trapped in it were unprecedented, prompting county officials to issue their first evacuation orders due to smoke, not fire risk.

Many people stayed. That made Seeley Lake an ideal place to track the long-term health of people inundated by wildfire pollution.

So far, researchers have found that people's lung capacity declined in the first two years after the smoke cleared. Chris Migliaccio, an immunologist with the University of Montana, and his team found the percentage of residents whose lung function sank below normal thresholds more than doubled in the first year after the fire and remained low a year after that.

While it's long been known that smoke can be dangerous when in the thick of it — triggering asthma attacks, cardiac arrests, hospitalisations and more — the Seeley Lake research confirmed what public health experts feared: Wildfire haze can have consequences long after it's gone.

That doesn't bode well for the 78 million people in the western United States now confronting historic wildfires.

Toxic air from fires has blanketed California and the Pacific Northwest for weeks now, causing some of the world's worst air quality. Smoke from the West Coast blazes has drifted as far away as Europe.

Toxic Air Due to Wildfires Leaves Damage Long After the Smoke (cont'd)

Extreme wildfires are predicted to become a regular occurrence due to climate change. And, as more people increasingly settle in fire-prone places, the risks increase. That's shifted wildfires from being a perennial reality for rural mountain towns to becoming an annual threat for areas across the West.

"This is the question that everybody is asking," Hystad said. "'I've been sitting in smoke for two weeks, how concerned should I be?'"

Health officials warned those who stayed to avoid exercising and breathing too hard, to remain inside and to follow steps to make their homes as smoke-free as possible. The health department also worked to get air filters to those who needed them most.

But when flames got too close, some people had to sleep outside in campsites on the other side of town.

One of the known dangers of smoke is particulate matter. Smaller than the width of a human hair, it can bypass a body's defences, lodging deep into lungs. Lu Hu, an atmospheric chemist with the University of Montana, said air quality reports are based on how much of that pollution is in the air.

"It's like lead; there's no safe level, but still we have a safety measure for what's allowable," Hu said. "Some things kill you fast and some things kill you slowly."

Click here to read the article.

See *Making DC housing livable again* on page 4

How the DC Housing Authority Plans to Make Public Housing Livable Again

Decades of community mismanagement, inconsistent funding, and different directorships have left DC's 41-property public housing portfolio in varying states of dilapidation. The latest DC Housing Authority (DCHA) administration has put forth a far-reaching plan that sets priorities for repairs, maintenance, and repositioning of various communities in hopes of salvaging some units and, for other units, offering their residents a better option.

In 2018, a year after being appointed director of DCHA, Tyrone Garrett informed the public that much of the city's public housing was borderline uninhabitable. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was committed to not dedicating any funding toward a maintenance backlog affecting public housing systems nationwide, and city funding alone could not adequately address those needs.

The oldest remaining communities had been around for at least 60 years, and hazards and unsuitable conditions had long been identified throughout DCHA's properties, including lead paint, flooding, rodent and pest infestations, and toxic mold. HUD had called upon housing authorities to reposition their units to move them from under the traditional public housing umbrella, and most, DC included, saw the financial leverage of public-private partnerships as the only way out of a rut.

DCHA's plan to overhaul its portfolio

In the 20-Year Transformation Plan DCHA released last September, DC identified that rut as totaling at least $2.2 billion to enable the agency to update properties and restore livable conditions for its residents — 150 times the typical annual allotment from HUD and the city. The report also noted that it would require a minimum of $785-850 million cash-on-hand to improve 6,803 of the housing units within 17 years, using an average annual allotment of $45-50 million. These efforts to improve the portfolio would begin with an "Early Action Strategy" focused on 14 properties, comprised of 2,610 units, deemed in need of "extremely urgent" intervention.

How the DC Housing Authority Plans to Make Public Housing Livable Again (cont'd)

Four of the 14 properties (Judiciary House, Kelly Miller Townhomes, Langston Additions/Langston Terrace, and LeDroit Apartments) would undergo extensive rehabilitation through the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) process to extend the properties' life by 15-20 years and change their classification from Section 9 (traditional public housing) to Section 8 (project-based voucher housing).

The remaining 10 (Benning Terrace, Fort Dupont Additions, Fort Dupont Dwellings, Garfield Senior/Garfield Terrace, Greenleaf Gardens/Greenleaf Additions, Greenleaf Senior, Kelly Miller Walk-Ups, Richardson Dwellings, Stoddert Terrace, Woodland Terrace) were in such disrepair as to require replacement through HUD's Section 18 process, combined with RAD in some cases.

For properties being redeveloped, DCHA would retain control of the land through use of ground leases and would be listed as a co-developer of any competitively awarded projects. Each public housing unit razed would be replaced one-for-one to give residents the option to return, and the new developments could maximize the potential number of housing units on the site. This would have the effect of making the land more valuable to borrow against, deconcentrating poverty by delivering units at different income levels (including market rate), and making such a project profitable to draw potential co-developers.

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See *Making DC housing livable again* on page 5

How the DC Housing Authority Plans to Make Public Housing Livable Again (continued)

Continued from page 4…

The agency would also retain the option to leverage its land value through the use of land swaps, trading parcels in one location for those in another under different ownership.

Although build-first, where new units are constructed for public housing residents to move into before they have to leave their homes, was identified as a goal, the redevelopments would likely require long-term relocation for over 5,000 residents through the use of federal protection vouchers.

Funding asks yield few answers so far

The price tag for these prioritized properties would be $343 million in the immediate term, and the agency stated its intention to exhaust all financing options (including use of grants, bonds, “philanthropic gifts”, HUD’s HOME fund, and tax credits) and minimize debt as much as possible.

Presumably, the use of voucher subsidies in the resulting developments would create a dedicated cash flow, and the savings from these rehabilitations and redevelopments would help finance maintenance improvements throughout the rest of the portfolio. In the meantime, DCHA requested a dedicated annual budget allotment from the city in order to help the agency bankroll its maintenance and rehabilitation ambitions.

However, members of the DC Council have questioned how DCHA spends its funds in the first place and whether additional funding would be misused. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer, which reviews and signs off on all city budgets, had told the Housing Committee that DCHA has cash reserves it could use as a stop-gap until dedicated funding was approved.

Eight out of 13 councilmembers co-sponsored a bill to give the mayor’s office oversight of DCHA.

Public housing residents and advocates intensified calls over the summer for the Housing Authority to concentrate on making immediate, non-maintenance order repairs rather than continuing to pursue redevelopments, particularly as stay-at-home orders left many residents with no reprieve from deteriorating units and unsanitary buildings.

How the DC Housing Authority Plans to Make Public Housing Livable Again (cont’d)

Nevertheless, the Council gave an additional $24.5 million to DCHA for the 2020 fiscal year to be used for the RAD work at Judiciary House, Kelly Miller Townhomes, Langston Additions, and LeDroit Apartments. Despite the coronavirus pandemic depressing revenue in the city this year, the Council also budgeted $50 million in capital funds for DCHA maintenance and repairs during the 2021 fiscal year (although DCHA will need to let the Council review its spending plan).

Public housing residents and advocates intensified calls over the summer for the Housing Authority to concentrate on making immediate, non-maintenance order repairs rather than continuing to pursue redevelopments, particularly as stay-at-home orders left many residents with no reprieve from deteriorating units and unsanitary buildings.

In the coming fiscal year, the agency essentially plans to spend $39,513,000 of city funds (and another $8.24 million in HUD funds) on repair, rehabilitation, and major maintenance. The rest of the funds will be used to pay for master planning, feasibility studies, and other pre-development costs at nine properties (including Greenleaf Gardens).

With rising calls for transparency from multiple directions, the next fiscal year may be instructive in whether DC Housing Authority can make good on its commitments to restore livable conditions for its residents.

Click here to read the article.

See *EPA guts pesticide safeguards* on page 6

EPA Guts Pesticide Spraying Safeguards for Farmworkers

Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) weakened safeguards that prevent farmworkers and rural residents from being accidentally sprayed with pesticides. EPA gutted the Application Exclusion Zone Requirements, which are a key provision of the Agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS).

The “Application Exclusion Zone” or AEZ is the area surrounding the pesticide application that must be free of all people other than the trained pesticide applicators.

The larger and better defined the AEZ, the safer the area. AEZ is critical for schools and residential areas that are right next to agricultural fields.

The rollback makes the following changes:

- The prior rule provided protection to anyone within the AEZ, but the new rule limits protection to only those within the boundary of the agricultural establishment. Under this provision, a pesticide handler does not have to stop application if someone is within 100 feet of the application, but not on the property. But drift does not stop at the property line. Schools, bus stops, and hospitals that are located near agriculture operations can get covered in dangerous pesticide drift and people can get acute poisoning. This rollback leaves communities surrounding agriculture fields directly in harm’s way.

- The prior rule required that no one other than trained and equipped pesticide handlers enter the AEZ boundaries during application. The new rule allows pesticide handlers to continue application if a non-employee is within the AEZ on the agricultural establishment is subject to an easement, meaning they have a right to be on the property. This change too increases the risk of pesticide exposure.

- The new rule shrinks the AEZ from 100 feet to 25 feet for certain ground applications of pesticides sprayed from above 12 inches, including pesticide applications that drift beyond 25 feet.

During aerial applications, up to 40% of the pesticide can be lost to drift, traveling long distances from the target area. Some pesticides will persist in the environment long after the application ended, contaminating air and water.

EPA Guts Pesticide Spraying Safeguards for Farmworkers (cont’d)

The EPA’s latest rollback is a despicable attack on farmworkers and rural communities. In yet another handout to industry, the EPA delivered a blow to the health and safety of farmworkers by weakening protections that prevent unnecessary and unsafe exposure to pesticides,” said Carrie Apfel, a staff attorney in the Sustainable Food and Farming Program.

“Exposure to pesticides have a range of negative health impacts, such as respiratory distress. Amid a respiratory pandemic, it’s unconscionable that an agency tasked with protecting public health would instead choose to seriously endanger vulnerable, yet essential workers and communities.”

Every year, approximately 20,000 agricultural workers, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — as many as 300,000, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office — suffer pesticide poisoning. The immediate aftermath of acute pesticide poisoning can result in rashes, vomiting, and even death. In the long-term, pesticide exposure has been associated with increased risk of cancers, infertility, neurological disorders, and respiratory conditions.

During aerial applications, up to 40% of the pesticide can be lost to drift, traveling long distances from the target area. Some pesticides will persist in the environment long after the application ended, contaminating air and water.

Now, the EPA is unraveling those protections in favor of big business. The rule is set to take effect on December 29, 2020.

Click here to read the article.

See *Swansea Council house* on page 7

Swansea Council House Filled with Damp and Mould from Floor to Ceiling (U.K.)

A Swansea Council house tenant claims she has battled with damp and mould from floor to ceiling in her home for the last four years.

The woman, who did not want to be named, also claims her two children, aged six and one, have been made ill as a result.

"I have been fighting to have it sorted for the last four years. I have treated it myself time after time, they have treated it a couple of times, but it keeps coming back," said the mum, who is pregnant with her third child.

Photos from inside the house in Penlan in Swansea show damp covering the walls from the floor to the ceiling.

The mum claims the issue is in every room in her house and inside her cupboards.

As a result, she discovered her little girl's clothes had grown mouldy, and the family experienced health issues.

"My little girl sleeps in my room next to a cupboard with damp and mould, she has a constant cold.

"My son suffers with skin problems on and off which is caused by the damp and mould.

"I had a blood clot on my lung when I was pregnant with my little girl. It is making us ill."

Swansea Council House Filled with Damp and Mould from Floor to Ceiling (U.K.)

She said the council have treated the mould on multiple occasions in the two-bedroom semi-detached home, even installing insulation by the bathroom, but nothing seems to work.

Recently, someone came to clear the mould and damp, however the pregnant mum was advised by the person who attended to do the work that she should request they come back.

"I have used all the mould and mildew cleaners, I have tried different ones to see if it will work, I have done it over and over again.

"It is in every room in my house, it is around my door, in my cupboards, on my walls."

Click here to read the article.

See *North Carolina mold after hurricanes* on page 8

As Mold Grows in the Aftermath of Hurricanes, More North Carolina Asthma Patients Suffer

In North and South Carolina, sea-level rise is most noticeable in counties along the coast, where beaches shrink, dunes disappear and homes crumble, but the effects of climate change reach well inland. "Beyond the Beach" is a seven-part series examining the health toll that climate change is already taking on the people who live and work in the Carolinas.

Pamlico County, wedged between its namesake sound and the mouth of the Neuse River, is surrounded by water on three sides and is a target for hurricanes that sweep up the North Carolina coast.

In 2011, Hurricane Irene made landfall near Cape Lookout and dropped more than 17 inches of rain over part of Pamlico County. Flood waters inundated Pamlico County homes, including those in Vantisha Williams' old neighborhood.

When the floodwaters receded, mold growth followed. And that, Williams believes, triggered her daughter Nazri's asthma. Nazri was then 3 years old.

"I remember making sure her nebulizer machine wasn't wet," Williams said.

Breathing problems and asthma medications are constants in the life of her family, which now includes twin 4-year-old sons Jonathan and Jeremiah. After storms, everyone starts coughing, she said.

"The humidity, the debris everywhere, the wetness, it could be making the asthma worse," Williams said from her Bayboro home. Health problems also are compounded by storm-related power outages that prevent the children from getting their breathing treatments.

In Eastern North Carolina, more people make trips to hospital emergency departments for asthma treatments than in any other part of the state, say researchers at East Carolina University. The researchers have been focusing on the connection between climate change and asthma, a chronic inflammatory disease, in the eastern counties.

In North and South Carolina, sea-level rise is most noticeable in counties along the coast, where beaches shrink, dunes disappear and homes crumble, but the effects of climate change reach well inland. "Beyond the Beach" is a seven-part series examining the health toll that climate change is already taking on the people who live and work in the Carolinas.

As Mold Grows in the Aftermath of Hurricanes, More North Carolina Asthma Patients Suffer (cont'd)

A study of asthma-related emergency room visits from 2010-2014 found that, as a group, eastern counties had the highest rates of hospital emergency department visits, compared to Piedmont and western counties. More than 90% of emergency department visits were from rural counties, according to the research published in the North Carolina Medical Journal in 2018.

Asthma-related emergency department visits trended up in eastern counties over the five years, while they were largely flat in the Piedmont and trended down in the west.

Greg Kearney, an environmental health professor and one of the paper's authors, said that mold growth in the aftermath of flooding is part of the problem.

Housing, air quality and other environmental factors contribute to ill health. Kearney said the connection between climate change, severe hurricanes and asthma in eastern North Carolina is being discussed a lot more since Hurricane Matthew in 2016, Hurricane Florence in 2018, and Hurricane Dorian in 2019 drenched North Carolina.

People with respiratory problems are living in homes with visible mold, Graham said.

"It's in the attic, there's mold in the walls, under the house," he said.

Click here to read the article, and click here to learn more about the Connected Coastlines initiative sponsored by the Pulitzer Center.

See *South Carolina mold after hurricanes* on page 9

Hurricanes Repeatedly Devastate this South Carolina Town, Leaving a Stinking Threat Behind: Mold

This is another piece of the 7-part series "Beyond the Beach" which is examining the health toll that climate change is already taking on the people who live and work in the Carolinas.

Almost every time Gwen Felton opened the door to her father's mobile home, a blast of stinking, moldy air smacked her in the face.

Mold had spread across the floors, crept up the walls and darkened the window sills of her dad's trailer after a series of hurricanes and floods began pounding Sellers five years ago. And as the fungus advanced, her father's already fragile health seemed to get worse.

When her father died last January at age 76, Felton couldn't help but wonder if mold had contributed to the variety of health problems that ultimately killed him. But Felton, a nurse for nearly 30 years, said others in this tiny community face similar threats.

"Sellers has a problem as far as mold, due to the rain and the conditions of the homes,'' she said. "People have been there all their lives and they don't know how to get help. They don't have any other choice but to live there.''

Similar troubles are occurring in other out-of-the-way communities across South Carolina, where storms and floods have been so severe since 2015 that people are suffering from exposure to mold.

Hurricanes Repeatedly Devastate this South Carolina Town, Leaving a Stinking Threat Behind: Mold (cont'd)

Each time powerful storms blow through, moisture rises beneath people's homes — and so does the fungus that's tied to an array of health ailments.

Allergies, coughing, wheezing, headaches and asthma are just a few of the problems linked to indoor mold exposure. For people who already have adverse health conditions, like Felton's father, mold in their houses adds to the health threat. But others also can suffer, including children, researchers say.

The advance of mold, felt acutely in poor areas where people have little money to kill it, is a consequence of the earth's changing climate, which scientists say has begun to cause heavier rains and flooding.

"Mold is generally caused by a combination of moisture and heat,'' said Gina Solomon, a University of California-San Francisco professor who studied the explosion of mold that occurred in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina 15 years ago.

"So, the conditions that foster the growth of mold get worse in any part of the country facing this for longer parts of the year. Those things are much more likely with climate change. We are seeing the conditions mold loves, unfortunately, expanding.''

Click here to read the article.

See *Native tribes being poisoned* on page 10

Native Tribes are Being Poisoned by Pesticides Made by U.S. Companies

At 9 a.m., during my first-year pathology class at Harvard Medical School, my classmates and I were asked to hold a liver with cirrhosis and discuss how it became that way. Many students mentioned chronic alcoholism, but I couldn't stop thinking about an Indigenous baby named Juan Antonio from my Tribe in Mexico, who died from the same disease at two years old. The cause of his cirrhosis? His mother was exposed to toxic pesticides manufactured by U.S. chemical giants before and during her pregnancy.

I am Hunkpati Dakota and Yaqui. My people have been practicing medicine on these lands for thousands of years, and I feel blessed to play a part in that beautiful story. This intergenerational history compels me to share how a U.S. pesticide law and others like it threaten the health of mothers, children, and future generations from my Tribe and other Indigenous communities around the world.

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), allows U.S. chemical corporations to export, often to less developed countries, "pesticides that are not approved — or registered — for use in the United States." Many of these pesticides have been banned domestically due to their known detrimental health impacts.

The Yaqui Tribe has communities in the U.S. and in Mexico. On our reservation in Arizona, FIFRA protects children from harmful pesticides. In our eight pueblos in Mexico, FIFRA allows them to be exposed. Juan Antonio and I come from the same Tribe, thousands of years older than the U.S.-Mexico border, but FIFRA apparently considered Juan Antonio unworthy of the same protections afforded to American citizens like me.

Juan Antonio's story is not an anomaly. For decades, hazardous pesticides sold by U.S. companies have contaminated our drinking water, sacred river, and homes via aerial spraying and large-scale burning of pesticide-laden crops. As a result, our community struggles with disproportionately high rates of stillbirths, infant mortality, birth defects, developmental disorders, cognitive deficits, asthma, and childhood leukemias.

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Native Tribes are Being Poisoned by Pesticides Made by U.S. Companies (cont'd)

As a Native American medical student, the disease processes my classmates and I study at a supposed objective distance in the classroom are often, for me, the science behind conditions that manifest from systemic and environmental racism, which devastate the lives of my people, despite consistent political action and outcry from our community leaders.

In order for the U.S. to export a domestically banned chemical, importing countries like Mexico are required to legally acknowledge the risks involved by signing a foreign purchaser acknowledgement statement (FPAS). Similarly, the Rotterdam Convention permits the export of pesticides banned in the manufacturing country so long as the importing country is notified — but this sets an embarrassingly low standard of global human rights leadership. Once the pesticides are sold, there is seemingly no built-in accountability or processes that give a voice to the Indigenous Peoples to prevent the following harm, the same harm that justified them being domestically banned in the U.S. in the first place.

Growing up, I was well aware that pesticides impacted my Tribe. But for the past six years, I have participated in Indigenous rights processes at the United Nations that helped me understand how pesticides impact other Indigenous Nations. As co-chair of the UN Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, I work with fellow Indigenous youth representatives who also come from communities being poisoned by imported chemicals banned in the Western countries that export them.

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See *Native tribes being poisoned* on page 11

Native Tribes are Being Poisoned by Pesticides Made by U.S. Companies (cont'd)

Continued from page 10…

Teen Vogue spoke with Baskut Tuncak, the UN special rapporteur on toxics, appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to conduct country visits and report on the human rights implications of exposure to hazardous substances. One of his recent country visits was to Brazil.

"In Brazil, there are repeated cases of pesticides pouring in from Switzerland, the U.S., and other countries, being sprayed intentionally or negligently over Indigenous children and other minority community members, whose lands are desired by agribusiness or just unfortunately near plantations," Tuncak said.

For more than a decade, Indigenous leaders across the world have been coordinating to change UN policies that set a low standard for countries and allow these practices to continue with legal immunity. Slowly, this pressure has created some hope.

In 2015, due to advocacy from Indigenous rights organizations like the International Indian Treaty Council, the treaty-monitoring body for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a legally binding convention, recommended that Mexico "prohibit the import and use of any pesticides or chemicals that have been banned or restricted for use in exporting countries." The United States has not ratified this treaty.

According to Saul Vicente, international director of the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples, a federal agency of Mexico, this recommendation has had an impact.

"Mexico is moving on a Declaration and has begun taking official steps to halt the import of all pesticides banned in exporting countries, including the United States," he told Teen Vogue.

At the global level, there is more than enough evidence to establish or strengthen international, legally binding pesticide policies to require importing and exporting countries to protect the rights of everyone, including Indigenous Peoples.

With the heartless disrespect of human dignity, the U.S. continues to allow the manufacture and export of domestically banned pesticides for the financial profit of chemical companies. The harms are well-documented, and the time for action is now.

Native Tribes are Being Poisoned by Pesticides Made by U.S. Companies (cont'd)

Such a framework should make it illegal for any company to export a pesticide or chemical that has been banned for domestic use.

At the national level, we need pesticide laws that respect science, uphold human rights, and withstand political change.

During the past four years, some banned pesticides, including one developed by the Nazi's during WWII, have been brought back onto the U.S. market and are currently being used within our borders.

This is just one example. But even if we banned every harmful pesticide and strictly regulated its uses domestically, pesticides do not respect borders.

Fruits and vegetables grown in other countries using pesticides banned for U.S. citizens can end up back on American dinner plates, as Al Jazeera has documented. Toxins sprayed in the air travel through the environment and can remain as residue on food products. Sending our bad pesticides elsewhere will not keep us safe.

With the heartless disrespect of human dignity, the U.S. continues to allow the manufacture and export of domestically banned pesticides for the financial profit of chemical companies. The harms are well-documented, and the time for action is now.

Click here to read the article.

See *Nightmare house* on page 12

Nightmare House: Woman's Struggle with Mould Riddled Home

A severely disabled woman is still unable to live in her 'forever home' as an ongoing battle to fix it plays out between the builder, the regulator and billion-dollar fund manager Perpetual.

Perpetual manages the trust fund for 23-year-old Paige Nicotra who suffered severe brain damage as a result of a hospital mistake when she was a toddler.

Homebuilder PJ Burns completed the three-bedroom home for $770,000, but it was deemed toxic back in June due to serious mould issues throughout.

Four months later, rectification work is only just starting with Perpetual claiming it has "lost confidence" in the Sunshine Coast based builder.

"We are deeply disappointed that our repeated attempts to engage with PJ Burns to outline a complete and detailed remediation plan have not been met with the same level of commitment, cooperation and urgency that we would expect in this situation," a Perpetual spokesperson said in a statement.

The statement accuses the builder of withholding plans required to assess a new major issue with the property.

"Following the appointment of our own building consultant, we uncovered a serious rising damp issue that appears to be coming through the concrete slab of the property," the Perpetual spokesperson said.

An engineer hired by the fund manager believes the new problem could be related to subsoil drainage issues.

"To date, PJ Burns has not supplied the subsoil drainage plans for the property, which are essential in order to confirm the root cause of the issue," the spokesperson said.

"Despite our repeated requests over a number of months to progress this matter, PJ Burns have not performed the necessary work to determine conclusively the cause of this issue."

A disabled woman is still unable to live in her 'forever home' as an ongoing battle to fix it plays out between the builder, the regulator and billion-dollar fund manager Perpetual.

A list of 59 defects were submitted to building regulator QBCC.

The fund manager has lost confidence that the builder (PJ Burns) will repair the defects.

Nightmare House: Woman's Struggle with Mould Riddled Home (continued)

Mr. Burns claims he is "determined to work with all parties" to resolve the issues and provide the family with "the home they deserve."

"Our remediation team is doing everything it can to address the QBCC recommendations as quickly and efficiently as possible, by addressing the root cause of the problem," Mr. Burns said.

A list of 59 defects were submitted to building regulator QBCC, only 26 were ordered to be rectified with work beginning last week.

Ms. Nicotra's mother Linda Hartman said their nightmare still has no end in sight.

"Paige has been in hospital for a bit over two weeks," Ms. Hartman said. They are planning to see a specialist in mould health problems to see if it has been caused by the toxic house she was living in.

Part of the response from Perpetual: Following the appointment of our own building consultant, we uncovered a serious rising damp issue that appears to be coming through the concrete slab of the property. We have lost confidence that PJ Burns is committed to remediating the many defects that the QBCC has determined they must address as well as the recently identified issue of rising damp that we have brought to their attention.

Click here to read the article.

See *PCB toxins airborne in high school* on page 13

PCB Toxins Airborne in Burlington High School

PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), used commonly in building materials before the EPA banned them in 1979, were found in the air of nearly every room sampled at the high school in September.

Studies have shown that PCBs cause cancer in animals and can also impact the immune, reproductive, nervous and endocrine systems.

VTDigger interviewed three leading experts on PCBs in schools, and provided them with the results of PCB testing done at BHS, including consultants' reports that VTDigger obtained last month via a public records request.

All said that the PCBs discovered throughout the campus had reached levels of serious concern.

"It's certainly not safe to go into the school," said David Carpenter, the director of the Institute for Health and the Environment at the University at Albany-SUNY, whose research focuses on PCBs. "I applaud the Vermont Department of Health for taking a stand on this."

"To me, those are high numbers," said Keri Hornbuckle, a professor of environmental engineering at the University of Iowa, who has studied PCB contamination for more than two decades.

Hornbuckle said the PCBs throughout the high school — not just the technical center, which had the highest level of contamination, but in the other five buildings as well — had reached levels even higher than those she had measured in homes beside a PCB waste site in Massachusetts.

"It's like those kids are living next to a PCB superfund site and breathing that air every day they're in school," she said.

Robert Herrick, an environmental scientist and retired professor of public health at Harvard, who has researched PCBs in schools extensively, also agreed. The PCB levels across campus were "clearly elevated," he said, and particularly, the levels discovered in the soil were "really disturbing, and hard to explain."

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PCB Toxins Airborne in Burlington High School (continued)

One thing is clear, though: PCBs are cancer-causing, and they can also inflict neurological and developmental damage, particularly in children. "There is a tremendous amount of data showing that PCBs are very hazardous to children," Hornbuckle said.

The Vermont state screening level for PCBs — 15 nanograms per cubic meter — and the EPA's, which, for young high-schoolers, is 500.

While PCB levels in the school's technical center reached concentrations as high as 6,300 (a level that is "criminal," Carpenter said) the other five wings of the high school had levels that ranged from 1.1 to 300, which fall under the EPA screening level for teenagers and adults.

The EPA screening level assumes, though, that the soil contamination at the school is "the same as in average homes or other buildings without elevated PCBs." At BHS, elevated PCB levels in the soil were discovered throughout the property.

Carpenter took a hard line against the EPA, calling its recommendations "totally inadequate." Rooms throughout the school, he said, were "not safe for anybody to be in," including many of those with levels beneath the 500 guideline.

Click here to read the article.

See *Carbon monoxide poisoning* on page 14

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Kills Two People (caused by generators)

Officials with the Oklahoma City Fire Department report that two people died this week due to carbon monoxide poisoning linked to generators left inside the structures.

Generators were a popular item this week due to the ice storm that left thousands without power.

According to the fire department, firefighters responded at about 5 p.m. Wednesday to a medical call at a home near South Pennsylvania Avenue and Southwest 22nd Street.

They entered the home and found a man dead in a bedroom. A generator, no longer running, was found in another room next to an open window.

Investigators believe that the generator had run out of fuel before firefighters arrived. The fatality is suspected to be from carbon monoxide from the generator, according to the fire department.

Officials said they responded to another medical call at 10:45 a.m. Friday at a commercial building near South May Avenue and Southwest 11th Street. Someone was staying there and officials said when firefighters arrived, they found an elderly man dead inside the building.

According to the fire department, a generator was also found inside the structure. Firefighters used monitors and reported 800 ppm of carbon monoxide.

Officials urge residents to only operate generators outside, well away from the home, so that exhaust and deadly carbon monoxide will not enter the home through doors, windows, or vents.

Carbon monoxide is produced by many things; wood-burning fireplaces, charcoal grills, gas grills, exhaust from running vehicles, and certainly generators, according to the fire department.

Click here to read the article.

Mold Damage Repairs at South Carolina Schools Could Cost $3

Officials for a South Carolina school district say it could cost up to $3 million to fix damage and prevent the future spread of mold that was discovered in two buildings.

Construction workers found the mold from high water activity inside the walls of a Beaufort County elementary school and a middle school while replacing classroom air-conditioning units, officials said.

District spokeswoman Candace Bruder told the Island Packet and Beaufort Gazette that the mold was likely caused by “faulty air-conditioning installations” performed two decades ago.

“A student can’t go anywhere near the areas of concern, and there is no air mixing from that area to the rest of the building,” Robert Oetting, the district’s chief operations officer, said this week while describing the repair plan.

The plan calls for replacing outdoor facades, installing drainage systems and working on HVAC units, among other fixes. Repairs at the middle school were expected to be less extensive than those at the elementary school, according to Oetting.

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